



**Osceola - Asi-yahola - Billy Powell**



**This is a biographical/historical work  
based on the 1904 public domain book  
“Four American Indians”  
by Edson L. Whitney and Frances M. Perry  
with edits, notes and additional illustrations  
  
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## EXODUS OF THE RED STICKS

The sun was low in the west and sent long shafts of light across the tops of the trees that bordered a quiet, shining lake in northern Florida. It shone upon a company of Indians who were straggling along the shore, and made their bright turbans and many colored calicoes look nice in spite of dirt and tatters.

The company was a large one. In it were not only braves, but also squaws and papposes, and a few negroes. They trooped along with the unhurried swiftness and easy disarray of men and women who have journeyed for many days and have many days of travel still before them.

Here and there a strapping brave bestrode a horse, while his squaw trudged beside him, sharing with a black slave the burden of household goods. But for the most part ceremony had given way to necessity and the warriors went afoot, leaving the horses and mules to carry the old men, aged squaws, and young children, who were too feeble to walk.

This was a band of Red Stick Indians who had left forever the camping grounds of their fathers on the Chattahoochee River, to escape the oppression of their powerful kinsmen, the Creek Indians. They had rebelled against the rule of the Creeks, because the Creeks refused them their share of plunder in battle, and laid claim to their lands and their slaves.

The Red Sticks hated the Creeks so bitterly that they could no longer live near them. They were resolved to leave altogether the territory that the United States government recognized as belonging to the Creeks, and seek homes with the Seminoles or runaways in Florida.





# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## CREEK INDIANS

The Red Sticks had left the Creek country far behind them, and had arrived, as we have seen, in northern Florida. The land into which they had come was uncultivated, wild, and sweet. The lakes and rivers were full of fish; the forests were full of game; fruits and berries grew in abundance. Everything seemed to invite the wanderers to tarry there and build themselves homes. Still they marched on over rich brown fields, past dancing lakes and streams, over fertile hill-sides shaded with live oak and magnolia. No spot, however beautiful, could induce them to pause for more than a few days' rest. Their object was not to find a pleasant camping ground but to escape the hated Creeks. They were bound for a distant swamp. On the borders of the Okefinokee marsh they planned to make their homes. There they would be reasonably safe from the enemy, and even if the Creeks should follow them there, the swamp would afford them a secure retreat.



But this goal was still many miles away, and the fugitives were now pressing toward a little hill, where they expected to make a short halt.

The young men were silent but alert. Now and again one raised his bow and brought down a goose or a wild turkey, and some youngster plunged into the thicket to find it and fetch it to his mother. Here and there were groups of women burdened with kettles and pans and bundles of old clothes, or carrying small children and raising a great clamor of chatter and laughter.

A little apart from the main company a tall and handsome Indian woman plodded silently along by herself. The splendor of her kerchief had been faded by sun and rain; her skirts were torn by briars, but the necklace of silver beads wound many times about her throat retained its glory. On one hip rested a huge basket, packed and corded. Astride the other rode a sturdy-limbed boy of about four years of age. Nearly all day the child had run by her side without complaint. But toward evening he had begun to lag behind, until at last, when, after a good run, he caught up with his mother, he clutched her skirts to help himself along. Then she had stooped and picked him up with a sort of fierce tenderness and in a moment he had fallen asleep.

Soon the Indians reached the hilltop where they were to camp for a few days. Their preparations for the night's rest consisted chiefly in building camp fires; for, though the days were warm, the nights were chilly. Besides, fires were needed to cook food and to keep the wild beasts away during the darkness. A small fire of light brush was made first. Then several large logs were placed about it, each with one end in the flame, so that they looked like the spokes of a great wheel radiating from a center of fire. As the ends of the logs burned away, the fiery ring at the center grew wider and dimmer. When a hotter fire was wanted, the logs were pushed toward the center till the glowing ends came together once more and burned briskly.

On the morning after the Red Sticks went into camp on the hill, while others lounged and talked together, the woman wearing the necklace of silver beads still kept apart. She sat on the unburned end of a fire log and for a time paid no heed to the question her small son had repeated many times. At last she looked up and said: "Do not ask again about the baby with the blue eyes. Do not think of her. She does not cry for you. She plays with little Creek papposes. She is not your sister any more. Go, play at shooting turkeys with black Jim. He loves you like a brother."

The woman was the daughter of a chief. She had married a man of her own tribe, but after he fell in battle she married a Scotch trader, named Powell, who lived among the Creeks. When the time came for the flight of the Red Sticks her heart turned to her people. She enjoyed too much the glory of being a trader's wife to give up her position and her home without much bitterness.

But she was too true an Indian to desert her tribe. As her husband had no notion of leaving his trading station among the Creeks, she had left him and her blue-eyed baby and had come with her kindred, bringing with her her little son, a true Indian, the child of her first husband.

The boy played at shooting wild turkeys with black Jim that day, and many times afterward. As time passed he thought less and less of the blue-eyed sister and more and more of his comrade with a black skin.

**(Note)** *James McQueen was a Scots-Irish fur trader, the first to trade in 1714 with the Creek in Alabama. He became closely involved with the Creek and married into the tribe. James McQueen was the great-grandfather of Osceola, legendary Seminole leader.*

*Thomas Woodward, in 1859, reminiscing about the Creek in the book "Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians," said the following:*

*James McQueen was the first white man I ever heard of being among the Creeks. He was born in 1683-went into the Nation in 1716, and died in 1811. He married a Tallassee woman. The Tallassees then occupied a portion of Talladega county. In 1756 he moved the Tallassees down opposite Tuckabatchy, and settled the Netches under the chief Chenubby and Dixon Moniac, a Hollander, who was the father of Sam Moniac, at the Tallassee old fields, on the Tallasachatchy creek.*

*McQueen settled himself on Line creek, in Montgomery county. I knew several of his children—that is, his sons, Bob, Fullunny and Peter. Bob was a very old man when I first knew him. He and Fullunny had Indian wives. Peter, the youngest son, married Betsy Durant. They raised one son, James, and three daughters, Milly, Nancy and Tallassee.*

*The Big Warrior's son, Yargee, had the three sisters for wives at the same time, and would have taken more half sisters. After Peter McQueen died, his widow returned from Florida and married*



*Willy McQueen, the nephew of Peter, and raised two daughters, Sophia and Muscogee, and some two or three boys. Old James McQueen had a daughter named Ann, commonly called Nancy.*

*He called her after the Queen of England, whose service he quit when he came into Nation. Of late years it was hard to find a young Tallassee without some of the McQueen blood in his veins.*

*Ann McQueen was the daughter of James McQueen and an Indian woman. Peter McQueen, a prominent Creek leader and warrior, was either the brother or uncle of Ann McQueen. Ann McQueen married Jose Copinger and they had daughter Polly, who married English Trader William Powell. To Polly and William, a son, Billy Powell was born in 1804. Billy, also known as Osceola, became an influential leader of the Seminole in Florida, even though he was raised as a Creek by his mother. In the matrilineal culture of the Creek people, the father's heritage did not matter, the child was raised in the clan of the mother. Ann McQueen was half Creek. Her daughter Polly was one quarter Creek. Osceola was one eighth Creek, although in Creek culture, he was Creek, an all or nothing proposition, according to the clan of the mother, and that was all that mattered.*

*In 1814, after the Red Stick Creek were defeated by United States forces, Polly took Osceola and moved with other Creek refugees from Alabama to Florida, where they joined the Seminole. In adulthood, as part of the Seminole, Powell was given his name Osceola. This is an anglicized form of the Creek Asi-yahola, the combination of asi, the ceremonial black drink made from the yaupon holly, and yahola, meaning "shout" or "shouter".*

### **Osceola as a boy**





# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## THE FLORIDA HOME

These Red Sticks were not the first wanderers who had sought homes and safety in Florida. For some fifty years bands of Indians enticed by the rich hunting grounds, or driven by the persecutions of the Creeks, had left their kindred in Georgia and Alabama to try their fortunes in Florida.

They had found other tribes in possession of the peninsula, but the newcomers were more warlike and soon made themselves and their claim to the land respected by the natives. Indeed, the immigrants soon came to be looked upon as the ruling people. They were called Seminoles, which means runaways.

The Seminoles would not attend Creek councils. They refused to be bound by treaties made by the Creeks. In all ways they wished to be considered a separate and distinct people.

Among the Florida Indians there lived a people of another race, the Maroons or free negroes. In those days Florida was owned by Spain. Therefore, American slaves once safely within its borders were free men. They became Spanish subjects and their former masters had no power to reclaim them. Florida formed a convenient refuge, and slaves were sure of welcome there, especially if they were willing to exchange a white master for a red one. Most negroes were glad to do this, for the slaves of the Indians were happy, independent slaves. Their chief duty to their masters was to raise for them a few bushels of corn each year. Though the Indians in general regarded themselves as superior to the negroes, the two races of exiles felt strong sympathy and affection for each other. They lived in the same manner, observing common customs. They fought together against a common enemy. They even intermarried.

But the country was extensive and only thinly settled; and so, notwithstanding the frequent increase of their force by Indians and negroes, warriors were still more valuable than land in the eyes of the Seminoles. The tribe of Red Sticks that went to Florida in 1808 was received with great friendliness.

The Indian woman with the silver beads soon married another brave, and went to live on a "hammock" near Fort King, not far from the place where Ocala now stands. She took with her her son. He was called Powell by some who remembered his stepfather, the trader. But his mother called him Osceola, which means the rising sun. Osceola grew up loving Florida as his home. And, indeed, it was a home that any Indian might have loved.

The climate was healthful for the Indians, and so warm and pleasant that clothing was a matter of small concern. The soil was rich, and corn and koontee were to be had in abundance. The forests were full of deer and small game.

A few skins thrown over some poles afforded sufficient protection for ordinary weather. But if rains made a more substantial dwelling necessary the palmetto furnished material for posts, elevated floor, and thatched roof.

Not least among the advantages of the Florida home were its wonderful waterways leading off through dense mysterious forests, where strange birds called and strange plants grew—a labyrinth full of danger for the intruder, but a safe and joyous retreat for the Seminole floating on the dark water in his dugout.

Though the Indians could have lived comfortably in this country without much effort, the Seminoles did not choose to live in idleness. They saw the flourishing farms of the Spanish settlers and wished to have farms of their own.

So it happened that when Osceola was a boy he saw the Indians around him make the beginnings of what they believed would be permanent homes. He saw them cultivate the soil and tend their herds of cattle and horses and hogs. He watched them build their dwellings and store-houses—palmetto lodges without walls for themselves, substantial log cribs for their corn and potatoes.

When a child, he imitated not only the warriors and hunters, but made cornfields of sand with tall grass spears for cornstalks, and built "camps" and corncribs out of little sticks.



As he grew older he often hoed the corn and ground the koontee and drove the cattle. He did cheerfully the work of a farmer, though he liked best to hunt and fish and explore. He had a strong boat made by burning out the heart of a large cypress log.

In this he often glided swiftly and noiselessly down some stream where the salmon trout lived. He held in his right hand a tough spear, made of a charred reed with a barbed end. When he saw a fish almost as large as himself close at hand he hurled his harpoon at it with all his force.

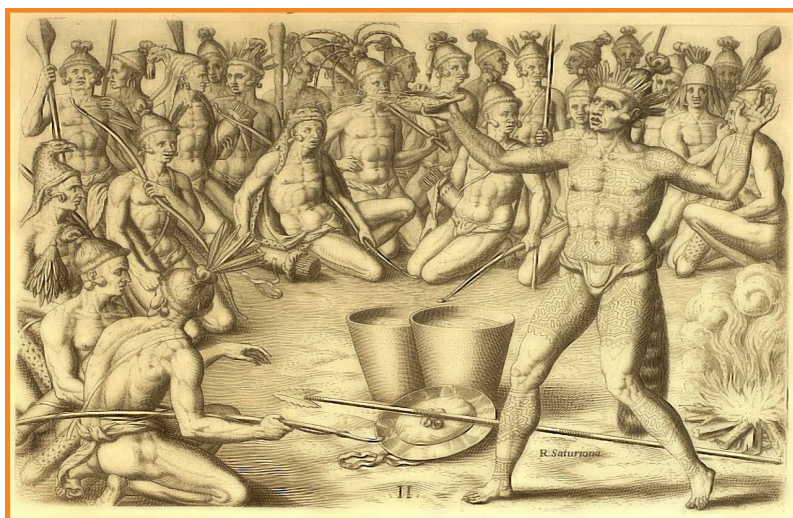
And the fish darted off, leaving a trail of crimson in the clear water and dragging the boat behind it; for the boy clung to the end of the spear and soused the wounded fish in the water until its strength was exhausted. Then with the help of a friend he dragged it into the boat, and began to watch for another fish.



Osceola was so energetic that he enjoyed work for its own sake. He had unusual endurance, and could keep at work or play long after others were tired. He was a famous ball player, and distinguished himself at the green corn dances. There he drank without flinching such large draughts of the bitter "black drink" that he was nick-named by some "Asseola," which means "black drink."

Osceola was not only active and enduring. He was also generous and helpful. His bright face, his frank manner, and true kindness made him a great favorite with all who knew him, Indians, negroes, or white men.

*(Note) Black drink is a name for several kinds of ritual beverages brewed by Native Americans in the Southeastern United States. Traditional ceremonial people of the Yuchi, Caddo, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee and some other Indigenous peoples of the Southeastern Woodlands use the black drink in purification ceremonies. It was occasionally known as white drink because of the association of the color white with peace leaders in some Native cultures in the Southeast. The preparation and protocols vary between tribes and ceremonial grounds; a prominent ingredient is the roasted leaves and stems of *Ilex vomitoria* (commonly known as yaupon holly), a plant native to the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Black drink also usually contains emetic herbs.*



**Saturiwa preparing black drink, St John's River Florida**



# Osceola *and the* Seminole Sorrow



## THE FIRST SEMINOLE WAR

When Osceola was a light-hearted boy of twelve, with kind impulses toward every one, something happened to rouse in him a bitter hatred, a thirst for blood.

During the War of 1812 large numbers of negroes in the South took advantage of the general excitement to make good their escape from bondage. The Indians welcomed them and shielded them from bands of slave hunters that made sallies into the Spanish territory for the purpose of recapturing them. In this the Indians were aided by the British, who saw an opportunity to make trouble for the republic on its southern border, while the United States troops were occupied on the Canadian frontier. A British agent built a strong fort on Spanish soil on the Appalachicola River. After the close of the war the British withdrew and left the fort, well filled with ammunition, in the hands of the Indians and negroes.

The Seminoles and their negro friends rejoiced over this. They could not foresee the doom that this fort was to bring upon them.

For many years the Southern people had complained bitterly against the Seminole Indians for "stealing," as they said, their slaves. The "stealing" consisted in receiving and protecting runaways. The feeling against the Indians was so strong that expeditions into Spanish territory had been made by people on the frontier to capture slaves and punish the Seminoles. But this fort would now be a hindrance to such forays, and the slaveholders demanded that it should be destroyed. They were so persistent in their demands that General Andrew Jackson gave General Gaines directions to invade Spanish territory with United States troops to blow up the fort and return the "stolen negroes" to their rightful owners.

For miles up and down the Appalachicola River the land along the banks was cultivated and divided into small farms, where Indians and negroes lived. When these farmers learned of the approach of the enemy they fled with their wives and children to the fort for protection.

Over three hundred men, women, and children crowded into the fort, feeling sure of safety. But when the troops attacked them by land and water, and the cannon roared about the walls of the fort, they were panic-stricken. The women and children shrieked and wrung their hands. The men did not know what to do; they rent the air with fearful yells, but made little attempt at resistance. What would they not have given to exchange the fort walls for an open boat and the endless waterways of the forest?

They were not left long to fear and regret. The enemy promptly accomplished its purpose. A red-hot ball reached the powder magazine of the fort. A terrible explosion followed, destroying the fort and bringing instant death to two hundred and seventy of its inmates.

The story of the horrible death, of the mutilated bodies of the injured men carried off on the boats of the white men, spread all over Florida. At every camp fire the tale was told, and all the old savage thirst for vengeance was stirred in the hearts of men who had begun to care for crops and herds and to dream of days of peace.

The Indians knew that peace with the white man was best for them. But Indian blood had been shed and peace was impossible. Preparations began at once for what was afterward known in history as the First Seminole War. The Indians bought arms and powder from Spanish and British traders. They practised shooting. They explored the country for safe retreats and excellent ambushes. They raised their crops and harvested them. A year passed before the first stroke of vengeance fell.

A boat carrying supplies to Fort Scott was surprised by Indians, and its crew, passengers, and military escort were overpowered and killed. The War Department had been expecting some hostile act on the part of the Seminoles, and was ready for war. The massacre in the vicinity of Fort Scott is usually regarded as the cause of the war of 1818, though it was not without its cause, as has been shown.





### Supply Boat Ambush

**(Note)** On July 27th, 1816, troops of the United States military assaulted and blew up an African-American and Native American settlement on the frontier of Spanish Florida during the Battle of Negro Fort. Negro Fort had served as a refuge for freed men and women, as well as those fleeing slavery in the South. Because of this, Georgian plantation owners feared it as a threat to the institution of slavery. The battle that ensued in 1816 at the fort is remembered today as the beginning of General Andrew Jackson's conquest of Florida and as either the forerunner to or first engagement of the Seminole Wars. The First Seminole War began in earnest the following year, 1817, and lasted until 1819, arising from the tension that resulted from Jackson's expedition into Northern Florida. After the First Seminole War, the group was forced to move deeper into Florida for fear of additional reprisals.

General Jackson promptly invaded Florida with a strong force of United States troops and Creek Indians, to punish the Seminoles. He was met by a motley crowd of Indians and negroes. Even children joined their fathers to resist the approach of the whites and Creeks.

Though they did not present an imposing appearance, the Florida Indians and their allies proved to be desperate fighters.

General Jackson first moved against the settlements on the Apalachicola. The Indians and negroes made a stand and fought a battle, but were obliged to retreat. Jackson then secured the provisions the Indians had stored there, burned the villages and pushed on to St. Marks and then to the valley of the Suwanee.

On this march he was much troubled by Indians who hung along his path, making frequent swift attacks and then vanishing in the wilderness. At Old Town a battle was fought in which the Maroons gave the Indians brave assistance. Here again the forces of Jackson were victorious. After suffering heavy losses, the Indians and their allies retreated. They were pursued by a detachment of Jackson's men and driven far to the south.

The Indians had taken the precaution to move the negro women and children out of reach of the American army, fearing that they would be captured and carried back into slavery, but they had been less careful to conceal their own squaws and papposes, and Jackson made hundreds of them captives. The battle of Old Town closed the war. Jackson, feeling that the Indians had been thoroughly beaten, withdrew from Florida, leaving fire and desolation in his track.

The boy Osceola, strong and straight, and with the spirit of an eagle, had played a man's part in the war. He combined with the reckless courage of youth a determination that made him capable of good service in Indian warfare. He was a good scout and an unexcelled messenger. Swift and light, and sure as the arrow he shot from his bow, he had carried signals from chief to chief, he had crept as a spy past the pickets of the enemy, he had acted as runner and guide, taking women and children from exposed villages to the secret recesses of the forest. Nor had his youth exempted him from doing the more deadly work of war.

The Seminoles had lost heavily in the war, but as a nation they had gained some things of great value. The hardships they had suffered together gave the various tribes a stronger feeling of fellowship than they had had before. Black men had fought shoulder to shoulder with red, and would henceforth be less their inferiors and more their friends.



# *Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow*



## GRIEVANCES

Not many days passed after General Jackson withdrew his army from Florida before the Seminoles were again established on the fertile lands from which they had been driven. They brought with them their flocks and herds. Before long their simple dwellings were re-built and the Seminole villages seemed as prosperous as ever.

The slaveholders of the South felt that Florida was still a dangerous neighbor. They saw that to mend matters it was necessary that Florida should be made a part of the United States in order that the government should have authority over the Seminoles. So, in the year 1821, through the influence of Southern statesmen the territory of Florida was purchased from Spain for five million dollars.

Now that the people of the United States owned Florida they wished to occupy the land, but the Seminoles claimed it. Many were unwilling to recognize the justice of this claim, however; for it was held that as the Indians were not native tribes but were Creeks they should be compelled to go back to Georgia and live with their kindred.

This proposal gave the Indians great alarm. They expected momentarily that an attempt would be made to expel them from their homes. By spreading a report that Jackson was coming to seize their property and drive them back to live with the Creeks, bands of lawless men created such a panic among the Indians that they fled into the forests and swamps, leaving their provisions and property for the plunderers to carry off.

Border troubles increased until action could not be postponed longer. A council was called at Camp Moultrie in 1823, where a treaty was made between the United States government and the Seminole Indians.

By the terms of this treaty the Indians were to give up all their land north of the Withlacoochee River, except a few tracts reserved for chiefs. They were bound to stay within the limits of the lands assigned them, and if found in the northern part of the territory without passports were to suffer thirty-nine stripes on the bare back, and give up their firearms. They were also pledged to assist in recapturing fugitive slaves, who in the future should seek refuge among them. In return for what they had given up the Seminoles were to receive from the United States at once, provisions for one year and six thousand dollars worth of cattle and hogs; and for twenty years thereafter, an annuity of five thousand dollars was to be paid to them. They were also assured that their rights would be protected. The United States promised "to take the Florida Indians under their care and patronage, and afford them protection against all persons whatsoever," and to "restrain and prevent all white persons from hunting, settling, or otherwise intruding, upon said lands."

The effects of this treaty were neither beneficial nor lasting. The Indians were moved from their homes to the southern part of the peninsula, where the land was poor. While they had once been happy and prosperous, they now became miserable and destitute, and dependent on the annual allowance from the government. The lands they relinquished were soon occupied by white settlers, and the red men and the white were again neighbors. Of course, the border troubles were renewed. The white men would never be satisfied until the Indians were expelled from the peninsula altogether.

The Indians were aware that the white settlers were eager to have them sent away. They tried to keep peace and avoid trouble. If any of their number violated the treaty, the Indians punished him themselves, even inflicting the ignominious thirty-nine stripes. The white men, however, were bent on making mischief. Indeed, one of the lawmakers of the Territory said frankly: "The only course, therefore, which remains for us to rid ourselves of them, is to adopt such a mode of treatment towards them as will induce them to acts that will justify their expulsion by force." The Indians had yielded many points for the sake of peace, but they were determined not to leave Florida. They believed that if they could abide by the terms of the treaty of Camp Moultrie for its full period of twenty years the United States government would admit their right to stay in Florida permanently.

Osceola was most active in trying to preserve peace. He had now grown to manhood. He had married Morning-Dew, the daughter of a chief, and they were living together happily near Fort King. Osceola was not a chief, but he was well known and liked among the Indians. He used his influence to keep the rash young men from violating the treaty. He wished to see the Seminoles do their full duty to the white people, not because he was fond of the white race, but because he thought it well for the Indians that the peace should not be broken.

*(Note) As an adult, Osceola took two wives, as did some other high-ranking Muscogee and Seminole leaders. With them, he had at least five children. One of his wives was black, and Osceola fiercely opposed the enslavement of free people. Lt. John T. Sprague mentions in his 1848 history The Florida War that Osceola had a wife named "Che-cho-ter" (Morning Dew), who bore him four children.*



**Osceola's first wife Morning Dew (Che-cho-ter)**

His eagerness to keep the Indians in order made him greatly liked at Fort King. His services were often demanded there as guide or informer. But while he made every effort to keep the Indians from doing wrong, he did not think the white men blameless and said so frankly. He accused them of failure to punish men who were guilty of committing crimes against the Indians, of unfairness in seizing negroes, of theft of property, and of withholding annuities. Osceola's was a good kind of patriotism—he did not consider his enemies right, but he wanted his own people to be right, and did his best to make them so. But Indians, who are by nature revengeful, could not be expected to endure wrongs without some retaliation. Their complaints of injustice were met by the proposition that they move beyond the Mississippi, out of the white man's reach.

The nature of their grievances is clearly shown in a "talk" which Chief John Hicks sent to the President in January, 1829. He said: "We are all Seminoles here together. We want no long talk; we wish to have it short and good. We are Indians and the whites think we have no sense; but what our minds are, we wish to have our big father know. When I returned from Washington, all my warriors were scattered—in attempting to gather my people I had to spill blood midway in my path. I had supposed that the Micanopy people had done all the mischief, and I went with my warriors to meet the Governor with two. When I met the Governor at Suwanee he seemed to be afraid; I shook hands with him. I gathered all my people and found that none was missing, and that the mischief had been done by others. The Governor had them put in prison. I was told that if one man kills another we must not kill any other man in his place, but find the person who committed the murder and kill him. One of my people was killed and his murderer's bones are now white at Tallahassee. Another one that had done us mischief was killed at Alpaha. A black man living among the whites has killed one of my people and I wish to know who is to give me redress. Will my big father answer? When our law is allowed to operate, we are quick; but they say the black man is subject to the laws of the white people; now I want to see if the white people do as they say. We wish our big father to say whether he will have the black man tried for the murder of one of our people. If he will give him up to us, the sun shall not move before he has justice done to him. We work for justice, as well as the white people do. I wish my friend and father to answer. In answer we may receive a story, for men going backwards and forwards have not carried straight talks".

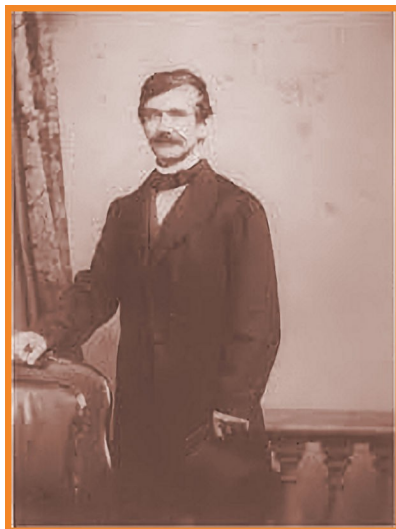
"I agreed to send away all the black people who had no masters, and I have done it; but still they are sending to me for negroes. When an Indian has bought a black man they come and take him away again, so that we have no money and no negroes, too. A white man sells us a negro and then turns around and claims him again, and our father orders us to give him up. There is a negro girl in Charleston that belongs to my daughter—her name is Patience. I want her restored to me. She has a husband here; she has a child about a year old. I want my big father to cause them to be sent to me, to do as he compels me to do, when I have just claims. If my father is a true friend, he will send me my property by our agent, who has gone to Washington. I have been told by the Governor that all runaway negroes must be given up, but that all those taken in war, were good property to us; but they have taken away those taken in war, and those we have raised from children".

"Will my father listen now to the voice of his children? He told me we were to receive two thousand dollars' worth of corn—where is it? We have received scarcely any, not even half, according to our judgment, of what was intended for us. If the Governor and the white people have done justly in this we wish our big father to let us know. We were promised presents for twenty-one years; we have received nothing but a few promises. It seems that they have disappeared before they reached us, or that our big father did not intend to give them to us. We were promised money, but we have not received a cent for this year. What has become of it? We wish our big father to ask the Governor. The white people say that we owe them, which is not true. We did take some goods of an Indian trader, Mr. Marsh, to whom the Governor had promised part of our money. We took the goods because we were afraid we should never get what was ours in any other way; they amounted to fifteen hundred dollars. We understand that Mr. Bellamy has received from the Governor sixteen hundred dollars; what is it for? The Indians do not owe him anything,—he has lost no property by us,—we have taken none of his cattle. If a tiger has killed one, it is charged to the Indians. If they stray away and are lost for a time, it is charged to the Indians. He has lost nothing by us; but my people have suffered loss[Pg 201] from him. He has taken all the Indians' hogs that he could lay his hands on. \* \* \* He has taken hogs—one hundred head—from one man. We can not think of giving away sixteen hundred dollars for nothing. According to the white man's laws, if a man takes that which does not belong to him, he has to return it and pay for the damages. Will our great father see that this man restores to us what he has unjustly taken



from us, for we look to our big father to fulfill his promises and give us the presents and money that are due to us. We understand that Colonel Piles has received some of the money that is due to us; he is a good man; when we were perishing with hunger he gave us to eat and drink. He is entitled to what he has received. It appears that the Seminoles who have done no mischief, have to suffer, as well as the few that have been guilty—this does not appear to be right to us. By stopping our money, the Governor has prevented our paying just debts, the debts we owe to the licensed Indian traders, who have trusted us under the expectation that we would pay them when we received our money. Our father has put two agents to look over us; our agent, Colonel Humphries, has not seen any of the money or presents that belong to us”.

"I am getting to be very old, and I wish my bones to be here. I do not wish to remove to any other land, according to what I told my father. When great men say anything to each other, they should have good memories. Why does Colonel White plague me so much about going over the Mississippi? We hurt nothing on this land. I have told him so before".



**Andrew Atkinson Humphrey, Indian Agent**



# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## THE TREATY OF PAYNE'S LANDING

One day when Osceola was at Fort King he was told that a great council was to be held at Payne's Landing, about twenty miles from the fort. The Indians' "white father" had sent special messengers to talk with the Seminoles, and all the leading men of the nation were summoned to come to hear his words.

Osceola knew that the message was about the Seminoles' leaving Florida. He was bitterly opposed to that project. He knew that some of the old chiefs were very easily influenced, and that the white men had a way of getting them to make promises in council which they afterwards regretted. He therefore wished that none of the Indians would attend the council. Then no action could be taken.

He went around advising men not to go to Payne's Landing. But the white men sent their messengers near and far, calling in the chiefs and head men. Early in May the streams were full of canoes and the forest paths were traveled by bands of Indians on their way to Payne's Landing. Seeing this, Osceola decided to go to the council himself, and do what he could there to prevent the chiefs from making any rash agreements.

Osceola was not a chief, but he was a recognized leader of the young men, and as he sat in the council house, stern and alert, many a glance was cast in his direction to see how he was impressed by the white man's talk.

He listened to the interpreter eagerly and learned that the President wished the Seminoles to give up the land that had been reserved for them by the treaty of Camp Moultrie. In exchange they were to occupy a tract of land of the same extent west of the Mississippi River in Arkansas among the Creek Indians. A delegation of chiefs was to visit the

country and if "they" were satisfied with the country, the Seminoles were to be transported to it in three divisions, one in 1833, one in 1834, and the last in 1835. Something was said about the payment of annuities, about the distribution of blankets and homespun frocks, and compensation for cattle and slaves stolen by the whites. But the point that concerned Osceola most of all was that the Seminoles were expected to leave Florida and live among the Creeks west of the Mississippi! Still there was no reason to be distressed about it, he thought, for it was to be done only if the Florida Indians were willing to make the change, and he knew that the Seminoles would never consent to leave Florida. With arms folded across his breast and a calm eye he watched one chief after another take the pen and make at the end of the treaty his mark or signature.

A short time afterwards seven chiefs and the faithful negro interpreter, Abraham, left for Arkansas to examine the new country. The delegation returned in April, 1833. Then the Indians asked, "When will the white men meet the red to hear what they think about going towards the setting sun?" "There will be no council," said the agent. "You promised to go if the delegates liked the land. They like the land. Now you must go without any more talk."

"No, no! We promised to go if we were suited with the land when they told us about it!" exclaimed the Indians. The agent repeated, "You gave your word to your white father that you would go if the country pleased your chiefs. The chiefs were well pleased." Then he added, "They met your white father's messengers on the new land and pledged their faith that you would go. They promised for you. They signed another treaty. You agreed to do as your chiefs wished. Your chiefs have promised your white father. There is no help for it. You must go."

When Osceola heard this he was in a rage. The white men had got the chiefs away from their own people and induced them to make promises they had no right to make. What right had Charley A. Mathla to promise for him or to promise for Micanopy, the head chief of the nation?

Osceola was not the only indignant one. All the Indians were in a fury with the government agents. They felt that they had been tricked, caught by a phrase they did not understand. They believed that undue influence had been brought to bear upon their chiefs. Had the delegates been allowed to return to Florida to give their report, some Indians would have heard it with favor, but all were angered because the

chiefs had been influenced to make an additional treaty at Fort Gibson without consulting their people. But the Indians were usually as severe in their judgment of their own race as in their condemnation of another and they did not spare the chiefs who had signed the additional treaty. Men and women alike held them in supreme contempt. They scolded, they ridiculed till the men in self defense declared that they had not signed the treaty, and gave so many reasons why the Seminoles should not go west that the spirit against emigration was more positive than ever.

The faith of even those Indians who had striven to keep peace with the United States was destroyed by the "Additional Treaty" and a general feeling of ill will prevailed. The Indians refused to surrender negroes claimed as slaves by the white people, and were so hostile that in 1834 General Jackson, then president of the United States, determined to force them to leave if necessary. He had the treaties ratified by the Senate, appointed a new Indian agent, and ordered that preparations for the removal of the Indians should be pushed with all speed.

In October the new Indian agent called a council. This time Osceola went about urging the Indians to attend and advising the chiefs about their talks. In the council the slender, energetic, young warrior sat next to the fat, inactive old chief, Micanopy. Osceola had no right to speak in council, but there was no man there who had more influence. If Micanopy wavered under the stern eye of the white man, he heard the voice of Osceola in his ear and did the young man's bidding.

Micanopy denied signing the treaty of Payne's Landing. When shown his mark he declared that he had not touched the pen, though he had been on the point of doing so, "for," he said, "the treaty was to examine the country and I believed that when the delegation returned, the report would be unfavorable. It is a white man's treaty, and the white man did not make the Indian understand it as he meant it." He finished by saying that he had agreed to the treaty of Camp Moultrie and that by the terms of that treaty southern Florida belonged to the Seminoles for twenty years, scarcely half of which had passed.

Other chiefs spoke and said bitter things. The agent became angry and threatened to withhold the annuity unless the Indians signed a paper agreeing to leave without further trouble.

At this Osceola's eyes flashed fire; he sprang up like a tiger and declared that he did not care if the Indians never received another dollar of the white man's money; he and his warriors would never sign away their liberty and land for gold. Then, drawing his knife from his belt, he raised it high in the air and plunged it through document and table, exclaiming, "The only treaty I will sign is with this!"



**(Note)** *Osceola opposed General Andrew Jackson and the United States by stabbing the Treaty of Fort Gibson with his knife, in obvious defiance of the U.S., and by proclaiming the rights of the Seminole tribe to their land in Florida. Although he was not a chief, he earned the respect of the Seminole people through his actions and leadership skills, and they treated him in that regard. Other prominent chiefs of the tribe shared his convictions regarding the treaty, including Micanopy, the senior chief of the Seminoles to whom Osceola acted as adviser. This negation of the treaty was evidence of ardent resistance to the United States Government, and resulted in rapid deterioration of relations between the U.S. government and the Seminoles.*





# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## HOSTILITIES

The new Indian agent, General Thompson, had marked Osceola as a man of power. He thought it wise to make friends with him. So when Osceola went to Fort King he was cordially received by the agent. Once on returning from New York the latter brought Osceola a beautiful new rifle, which was worth one hundred dollars. Osceola was pleased with the rifle and pleased with this evidence of General Thompson's regard for him. But he was not to be bought by gifts to forsake the cause of the Seminoles.

He saw that the white men were actually getting ready to move the Indians; they were preparing transports at Tampa and making ready for the sale of the Indians' cattle. Another council was called at Fort King.

On the night before this council, Osceola spoke to a gathering of chiefs who had met secretly in Micanopy's village. He told them that, whatever happened in council, they must be prepared to resist force with force should the white men attempt to compel the Indians to emigrate. They must take advantage of every opportunity to buy powder and lead, to increase their store of food and ammunition. He advised them to declare in council their wish for peace, but to maintain firmly that they were determined never to leave Florida.

At the council the next day, Jumper acting as spokesman for the Indians expressed these views. When he had finished, the agent arose and rebuked the Indians for breaking their word. His charge of dishonor excited the Indians and many lost their tempers. In the confusion that followed, General Clinch threatened to order in the soldiers if the Indians did not sign the compact to leave Florida, without further parley. This threat proved to be effectual. Several chiefs signed, but three of the leading chiefs refused to do so. For punishment General Thompson ordered that their names should be stricken from the list of chiefs.

This enraged the Indians and the agent realized that he had lost more than he had gained by the council. He sent word to Washington that the Indians were in no mood to leave Florida and that there would be bloodshed if an attempt was made to enforce the treaty of Payne's Landing. Accordingly, the date for embarking was changed to a more distant date.

Osceola made good use of the delay in adding to his war supplies; but one day he was refused powder. This indignity surprised and offended him. A refusal to give an Indian firearms or powder was evidence of distrust, and Osceola was used to respectful usage. "Am I a negro, a slave?" he exclaimed. "My skin is dark, but not black. I am a red man, a Seminole. The white man shall not treat me as if I were black. I will make the white man red with blood and then let him grow black in the sun and rain." His language became so violent that General Thompson ordered him put in irons and cast into prison.

Alone in the dark, Osceola ceased to rave. Thoughts of a terrible vengeance soothed him. He planned it all carefully. After several days had passed he seemed repentant. He asked to see General Thompson and said he had spoken in anger. He expressed his friendship for the agent and his willingness to assist in persuading the Indians to live up to their treaty.

After he was liberated Osceola seemed as good as his word. His manner at the Fort changed. He even brought in two or three sub-chiefs to sign the treaty. The agent was completely deceived and believed he had gained a powerful ally. When the Indians learned that Osceola had been put in irons they felt his wrong as their own and wished to visit the agent with swift punishment. But Osceola looked at the place on his wrist where the fetters had been and said: "That is my affair. Leave General Thompson to me. Your part is to see that no Indian leaves Florida."

Almost daily something happened to show both Indians and white men that they could no longer live together in peace. One evening while a little company of Indians was camping in a hammock cooking supper, a party of white men came upon them, seized their rifles, examined their camping equipment and then fell to beating them. While they were occupied in this way some friends of the campers came up and seeing the plight of their comrades opened fire on the white men. The latter returned the fire and killed an Indian.



While the Indians blamed the white men for this affair the white men held the Indians responsible for it. They ordered out the militia to protect the citizens and punish the Indians. Both parties believed that the time had come for definite action. By definite action the white men meant the transportation of the Seminoles, the Indians meant war. The former pushed forward preparations at Tampa, and issued a summons to all Indians to come in, sell their cattle and pledge themselves to assemble on the first of January 1836 for their journey. The latter held a council and decided that while the Indians promised to assemble at the beginning of the year it should be for war rather than emigration. They further agreed that the first Indian to sell his cattle and prepare in good faith to go should be punished with death.

As might be inferred from this decision, there were some Seminoles whose loyalty to their race could not be counted on. A chief, Charley A. Mathla, who had been one of the delegates to visit Arkansas, was one of these. As he was known to be on good terms with the white people, Osceola ordered that he should be closely watched. He soon learned that there was only too much ground for his suspicion. Charley was getting ready to leave; he had driven his cattle to Tampa and sold them to the white people. If he were allowed to go unpunished other wavering ones would soon follow his example. Osceola wished his warriors to know from the start that punishment for disobedience to him would be more swift and terrible than anything they need fear for disobeying the white man.

With a few faithful followers he hastened through the wilderness towards the village of Charley A. Mathla. There scouts brought him word that Chief Charley was on his way home from Tampa. The war party hid among the trees where the trail to the village passed through a hammock. They had not waited long before the chief came swiftly along the path. Osceola rose and fired. His comrades followed his example. Charley A. Mathla fell forward on the path without a word, dead.

One of the party seized a handkerchief that the dead chief grasped in his hand and showed Osceola that it was full of money. Osceola took the offered treasure and cast the glittering coins far from him. The Indians watched them disappear among the green leaves with surprise and regret. But their leader said, "Do not touch his gold; it was bought with the red man's blood."



# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## The Dade Massacre

In a short time news of the murder of Charley A. Mathla reached Fort King. With it came a rumor that the Indians were holding councils of war in the villages of the Big Swamp. But it was impossible for the agent to get definite information, as the woods were full of hostile Indian scouts. The runners who were on friendly terms with the men at the fort feared to venture beyond the protection of its guns lest they should suffer the fate of Charley A. Mathla.

After the shooting, Osceola and his followers repaired to the fastnesses of Wahoo Swamp, where for some time Indians had been assembling from exposed villages. Here were collected vast stores of ammunition and food supplies, herds of cattle, women and children and old men, both red and black, and many warriors of the two races.

Osceola was now recognized as a war chief. In council no one was listened to more eagerly than he. While addressing the assembled warriors he said: "Remember, it is not upon women and children that we make war and draw the scalping knife. It is upon men. Let us act like men. Do not touch the money of the white man or his clothes. We do not fight for these things. The Seminole is fighting for his hunting grounds."

Definite plans were made for opening the war at once. Negroes living in the neighborhood of Fort Brooke near Tampa had brought word that Major E. L. Dade was to conduct reënforcements from Fort Brooke to Fort King. The detachment would pass on its march within a short distance of Wahoo Swamp and might easily be surprised and overpowered. Plans were formed for such an attack. Several days would probably pass, however, before Major Dade's force, encumbered with cannon and marching through marshes, would reach the point best suited for the Indians' attack.

In the meantime Osceola must make a visit to Fort King. There was a white man there whose scalp he had sworn should be the first one taken in the war. With a small band of warriors he started on his errand of vengeance.

Osceola knew General Thompson's habits. He was accustomed to take a walk after dinner while he smoked a cigar. Frequently he walked some distance from the fort, going out towards the sutler's house, where he sometimes had business. Osceola determined to wait for him in that vicinity.

He and his comrades lay closely concealed, and watched without ceasing. But for several days the weather was unpleasant and the agent did not go beyond the fort. Still the Indians waited. At last a fine day dawned, and shortly after noon Osceola saw from his hiding place two men approaching the sutler's house. From afar he knew that one was General Thompson. He crept closer to the path; his friends followed; all were silent as serpents. The unsuspecting men came nearer, laughing and talking in easy security. Rising on one knee, Osceola took steady aim and fired. Instantly other shots rang through the still air and the two men lay dead on the earth.

The Indians quickly scalped their victims. Then they hurried to the sutler's house, where they found several men at dinner; they surrounded the house and shot and scalped its inmates. When this was done they set fire to the house and took their leave with an exultant war whoop. No one pursued them; those who heard the shots and the war whoop, and saw the flaming house supposed a large war party had come to attack the place, and were afraid to investigate.

The Indians meanwhile left the neighborhood with all speed. They had stayed longer than they had intended and they were anxious to reach the swamp in time to share in the attack on Major Dade and his men. They set off through the forest, a grim and terrible company, smeared with war paint and stained with human blood.

Their knives and tomahawks were red; fresh scalps dangled from their belts or swung from poles carried over their shoulders. At the head of the company strode Osceola. On his head he wore a red and blue kerchief twisted to form a turban, from whose center waved three splendid ostrich plumes.

Darkness fell before the company reached the swamp, but as they drew near to its outskirts they saw the luminous smoke of camp fires over the trees and heard faint yells. This told them they had come too late for the struggle, but in time to celebrate the victory. They were greeted by the revelers with wild shouts of delight. All joined in a hideous dance about a pole on which were fastened the scalps that had been taken that day.

From the old chief, Micanopy, and his sub-chiefs, Jumper and Alligator, Osceola learned the details of that day's action. About two hundred warriors had taken their station in the outskirts of the swamp to await the coming of Major Dade and his one hundred and ten soldiers. They sent out scouts who brought them exact information concerning Dade's route and all his movements. They knew the information to be reliable, for they obtained it from Dade's guide, Louis, a slave, who was in sympathy with the Indians and Maroons. On the third day of their march the troops reached the point the Indians had decided upon as best adapted to their purpose. But neither Micanopy nor Osceola was present and many were unwilling to act without them. Some young warriors set out for Micanopy's camp and forced him to come with them to the scene of action. Even then he advised delay and it took all Jumper's eloquence to induce the old man to give the command for attack on the following morning.

Meanwhile Dade's men spent a good night in their camp, little dreaming how near to them was the enemy. On the morning of the twenty-eighth of December they resumed their march in good spirits. The Indians had left the swamp and hidden themselves in a pine barren, near which the roadway wound. On one side was a deep swamp; on the other, a thin pine forest with a swamp beyond it. They found hiding places behind trees or on the ground sheltered by the saw palmetto and brush. From their hiding places the Indians saw the advance guard come into sight, reach, and pass them. Still Micanopy did not fire the signal shot. Now the main division was coming with Major Dade on horseback at the head. On marched the soldiers with unwavering tramp, tramp. The warriors crouched with muskets ready. Micanopy fired and Jumper raised the yell. Instantly the green waste was awake with the flash and bang of muskets, with death cries and savage yells. A white smoke hid the scene for a moment. When it cleared away, the road was strewn with the dead and dying. The Indians having reloaded their guns, rushed from their hiding places to finish their work.



Some of Dade's men sprang to the thicket to seek refuge behind trees. They were followed and shot down. Others caught their feet in the heavy stems of the palmetto and, stumbling, fell an easy prey to their pursuers. The officers who had escaped the first fire did their best to rally the men. The cannon was brought into action and added its roar to the din of battle. But its balls went over the heads of the Indians and they succeeded in shooting the gunners before they could do any harm.

The contest seemed over. The warriors were scattered in pursuit of fugitives or busy scalping the dead, when a negro brought word to Jumper that a number of the soldiers had collected and were building a fort of logs with the cannon to protect them. Jumper raised the yell and called together his Indians for a charge on the little company of brave men who were making their last stand behind tree trunks placed on the ground in the form of a triangle. The soldiers had exhausted their powder and were able to offer only a feeble resistance to the savages, who shot them down without mercy.



The Indians carried off their own dead and wounded—three dead and five wounded. But they left the bodies of Dade's men to tell their own story to those who should find them. So well were the commands of Osceola heeded that months later when white troops found the dead, their money, watches and clothes were untouched.

The battle over, the Indians returned to the swamp to await Osceola, count scalps, and celebrate their victory. Of one hundred and ten soldiers only four escaped.

Only three white men survived the battle. Edwin De Courcey was hunted down and killed by a Seminole the next day. The other two survivors, Ransome Clarke and Joseph Sprague, returned to Fort Brooke. Only Clarke, who died of his wounds a few years later, left any account of the battle from the Army's perspective. Joseph Sprague was unharmed and lived quite a while longer, but was not able to give an account of the battle as he had sought immediate refuge in a nearby pond. The Seminoles lost just three men, with five wounded. On the same day as the Dade Massacre, Osceola and his followers shot and killed Wiley Thompson and six others outside of Fort King.



**The Dade Massacre**



# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## OSCEOLA - A WAR CHIEF

As a fire that has smoldered long flames up in many places at once, so the war broke out with several actions in quick succession. The tidings of the slaughter at Fort King had not become generally known and the Indians had not slept after Dade's massacre, before preparations were afoot for another assault.

Scarcely had the victors wearied of shouting and dancing when an Indian, exhausted, not with revelry, but with swift running through forest and swamp, came into the camp, bringing important news. A council of chiefs was called. The bowl of honey water was passed around and when all had drunk from the deep ladle, the messenger rose to give his message.

He told the chiefs that General Clinch had left Fort Drane with two hundred regulars and four hundred Florida volunteers, and was already far advanced into the Indian country. Indeed he was even now approaching the Withlacoochee River.

Micanopy, with his usual caution, advised the Indians to keep out of the way of such a large force. But his hearers were in no mood to listen to his faint-hearted advice; they had been emboldened by their recent victories and responded to the fearless daring of Osceola. One hundred and fifty Indians and fifty negroes volunteered to go with Osceola and Alligator to intercept General Clinch and his six hundred soldiers.

With one accord the warriors bounded off towards the ford of the Withlacoochee. There the water was only two feet deep, and as it was the only place where the river could be crossed without boats, there could be little doubt that the white general would lead his forces to this point before attempting to cross the river.



For a day and a night the Indians waited to give their enemy a deadly welcome. In the neighborhood of the ford there was no sound to interrupt the music of the river, no sight to disturb the peace of the dense forest. But on the morning of the following day, scouts came skulking through the trees, and in a few minutes the apparently unpeopled place was alive with red men.

The scouts brought word that General Clinch and two hundred of his men had already crossed the river. They had made the passage slowly and laboriously in an old canoe that carried only eight at a time. But they were now advancing on this side of the river. Many a warrior's heart failed him when he heard this. But Osceola's dauntless spirit rose to the emergency. He cheered his men with words of such good courage that they were soon following him with new enthusiasm to a hill, where he posted them in a hammock to await the enemy.

On the morning of the last day of the year, General Clinch advanced towards the hammock. He was aware of the presence of hostile Indians, but not knowing of the outrages they had already committed, he felt reluctant to attack them. He sent messages to Osceola telling him that it was useless for the Indians to struggle against the white man and advising him not to enter upon a war that could end only with the destruction of his race.

To this humane counsel Osceola replied with haughty independence: "You have guns, and so have we; you have powder and lead, and so have we; you have men, and so have we; your men will fight, and so will ours until the last drop of the Seminoles' blood has moistened the dust of his hunting grounds." He added, what then seemed to the whites an idle boast, that after a few weeks' further preparation the Seminoles would be ready to enter upon a five years' struggle for the hunting grounds of Florida.

At about noon General Clinch charged up the hill. He was greeted with a lively fire, but his men were tried fighters and were not checked. On they came calmly returning the fire of the enemy. The Indians and negroes offered a determined resistance. If they wavered, the shrill and terrible "Yo-ho-e-hee" of their leader gave them new courage. Everywhere his white plumes waved in the thick of the fight. The fire of his warriors broke upon the enemy always at the most unexpected point, and had it not been for the bravery of General Clinch, the Indians would have driven the soldiers back to the river, on the other side of

which four hundred volunteers were watching the battle. But they held their ground, and at last Osceola was so seriously wounded that he ordered a retreat.

For an hour and twenty minutes the battle had raged. The loss of the Indians was slight. When at Osceola's signal the wild yells ceased and the Indians disappeared in the forest, they bore with them only three dead and five wounded. General Clinch had suffered much heavier loss. Eight of his men had been killed and forty wounded.

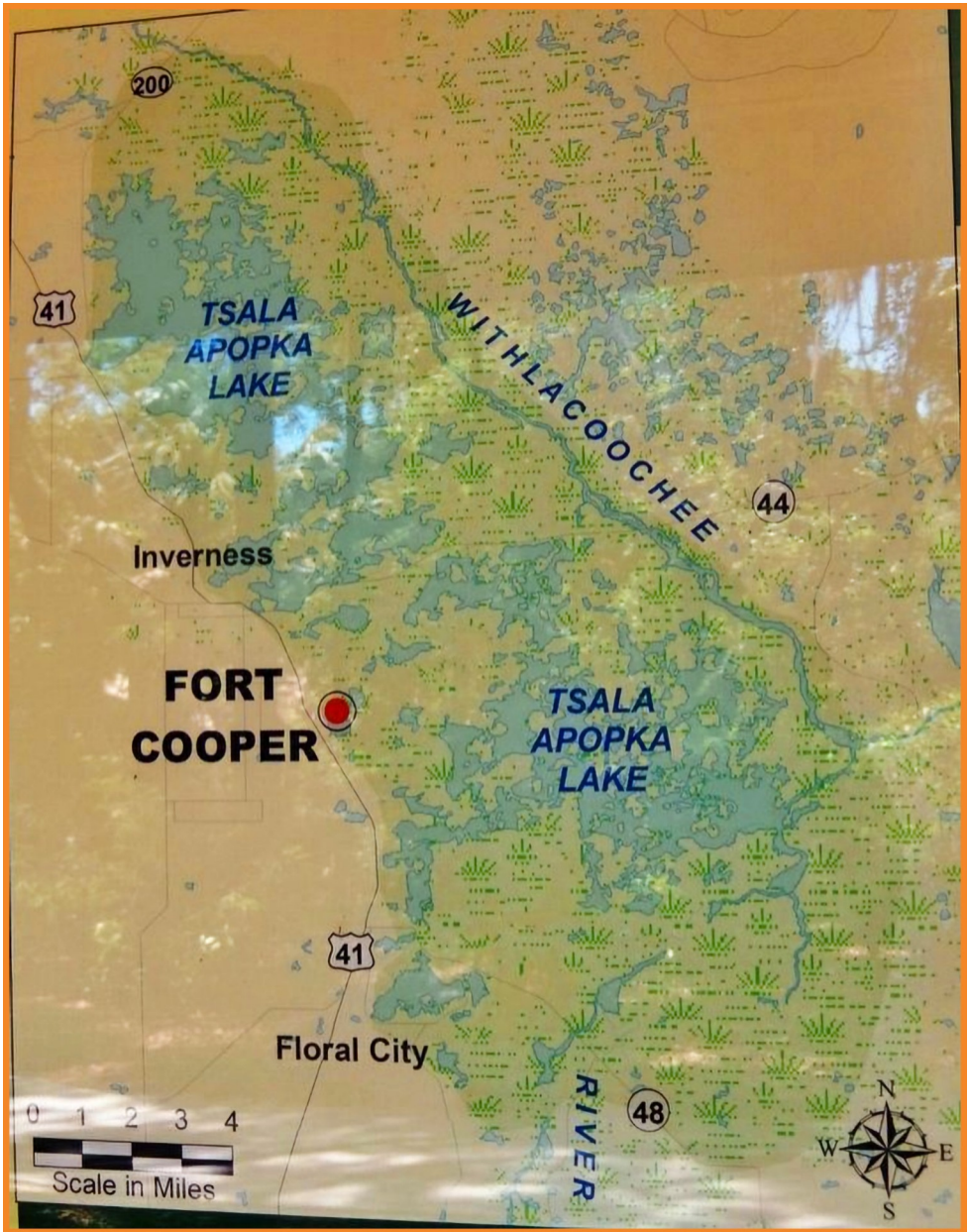
The Seminoles were highly elated by the success of the first engagements of the war. They regarded the battle on the Withlacoochee as a great victory, and Osceola's praises were on every lip. The old and timid Micanopy, head chief of the Seminoles by birth, kept that title of honor.

But Osceola who, before the war opened, was not so much as a sub-chief and had but two constant followers, had been the real power in planning the hostile acts that opened the second Seminole war. All knew this and they now made him head war chief of the nation.

He was only thirty-two years old, but he had the respect of all. With his own hand he had taken vengeance on the great white man who had wronged him; with his own hand he had punished the traitor chief, Charley A. Mathla. He had planned the massacre of Dade's troops. With a small band of Indians and negroes he had engaged the forces of General Clinch for more than an hour, inflicting heavy loss. His words had kindled the spirit of war throughout Florida.

On the border, lawless young men were spreading terror and desolation; in the month of January sixteen well stocked plantations were laid waste by the Indians. In the distant swamp, Indian women were moulding bullets for the warriors.

Through all the forest paths war parties were hurrying towards the camp of Osceola. The leader of each carried a bundle of sticks, each stick representing a warrior under his command. These were given to Osceola—but how many sticks there were only the Seminoles knew.





# *Osceola* *and the* *Seminole Sorrow*



## THE SEMINOLES HOLD THEIR OWN

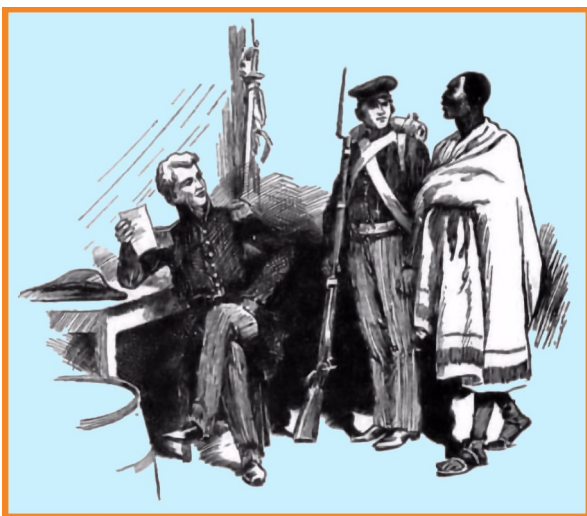
The hostile actions of the Seminoles at the close of the year 1835 convinced the War Department of the United States that the Seminole Indians would not submit to be driven from one section of the country to another like sheep. Though the combined force of Indian and negro warriors was not supposed to be greater than twelve hundred, their treacherous nature and the wildness of the country, made the task of subduing them so difficult as to require many times that number of soldiers. General Clinch was already in the field quartered at Fort Drane, not far from the village of Micanopy. There were several forts in the Indian country, but they were meagerly garrisoned. General Scott was made commanding general of the army in Florida, with authority to call on the governors of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama for assistance. He went to work at once to raise a force for an Indian war.

Meanwhile Major General Gaines, who was commander of the Western Military Department, started to Florida with a force of more than a thousand men. He ventured into the Seminoles' country with the hope of meeting them and fighting a decisive battle. He passed the scene of the Dade massacre and saw the work the savages had done, and after burying the dead he continued his march to Fort King. But in the whole of his march he saw not a single Indian. He had expected to find supplies for his army at Fort King, but being disappointed in this, he was obliged to return to Tampa with all speed.

While looking for the ford across the Withlacoochee River he ran into an Indian ambush and was so harassed by the savages that he had to give up his plan of crossing the river and go into camp. He had ordered General Clinch to meet him in this neighborhood, and he sent out expresses to see what prospect there was of his arrival. The Indians were gathering in large numbers, and he believed that if General Clinch arrived in time their combined forces could surround them and crush

them. But his supply of food was so reduced that he was obliged to have his horses killed to provide the men with meat. All the while the Indians were lying in wait and assailing all who ventured beyond the fortifications of the camp. On the fifth of February a negro who spoke good English came to the camp and asked to see General Gaines. The latter supposed he was a messenger from General Clinch, and ordered that the negro be sent at once to his tent. To the general's surprise the negro announced that he was Cæsar, the slave of the Seminole chief Micanopy, and that he had been sent by the Indians to say that they were tired of fighting and wished to make a treaty of peace. General Gaines told Cæsar that he had no power to make treaties, but that if the chiefs would pay him a visit the next day, he would grant them a truce and notify the President of the United States that his red children wanted to be at peace.

Cæsar had acted without consulting any one; he had been a favorite and had his own way with Micanopy until he thought himself greater than his master. He had grown tired of the hardships of war and decided to put a stop to it. When he returned and gave a report of his visit, the Indians were so angry that they were ready to kill him. The negroes, however, defended him, and Osceola, fearing trouble between the allies, used his influence to save him. Osceola's interference in Cæsar's behalf displeased some of the chiefs so much that they deserted without ceremony.



As Osceola was ready enough to visit the camp of General Gaines to see his force, he went with other chiefs on the following day, as Cæsar had promised, to hold an interview with General Gaines. Scarcely had the interview begun when General Clinch arrived and seeing a crowd of Indians at the entrance of the camp fired on them. This action broke up all parley; the Indians thought they had been dealt with treacherously and fled.

Since the Indian forces had been weakened and the strength of the enemy greatly increased, Osceola decided that it would be best for his warriors to withdraw and gave directions for them to disperse. The next day the two generals found their enemy gone. Their supplies were too low to justify an attempt to pursue them, and General Gaines returned to Tampa and General Clinch to Fort Drane without accomplishing anything.

Though General Clinch had not attempted to follow the Indians, Osceola and his warriors lost no time in finding his stronghold. They succeeded in making his fine plantation at Fort Drane so uncomfortable that in July when his crops were at their best he was obliged to leave it. Osceola immediately took possession of the place, and occupied it with grim pleasure until he was driven out a month later by Major Pearce.

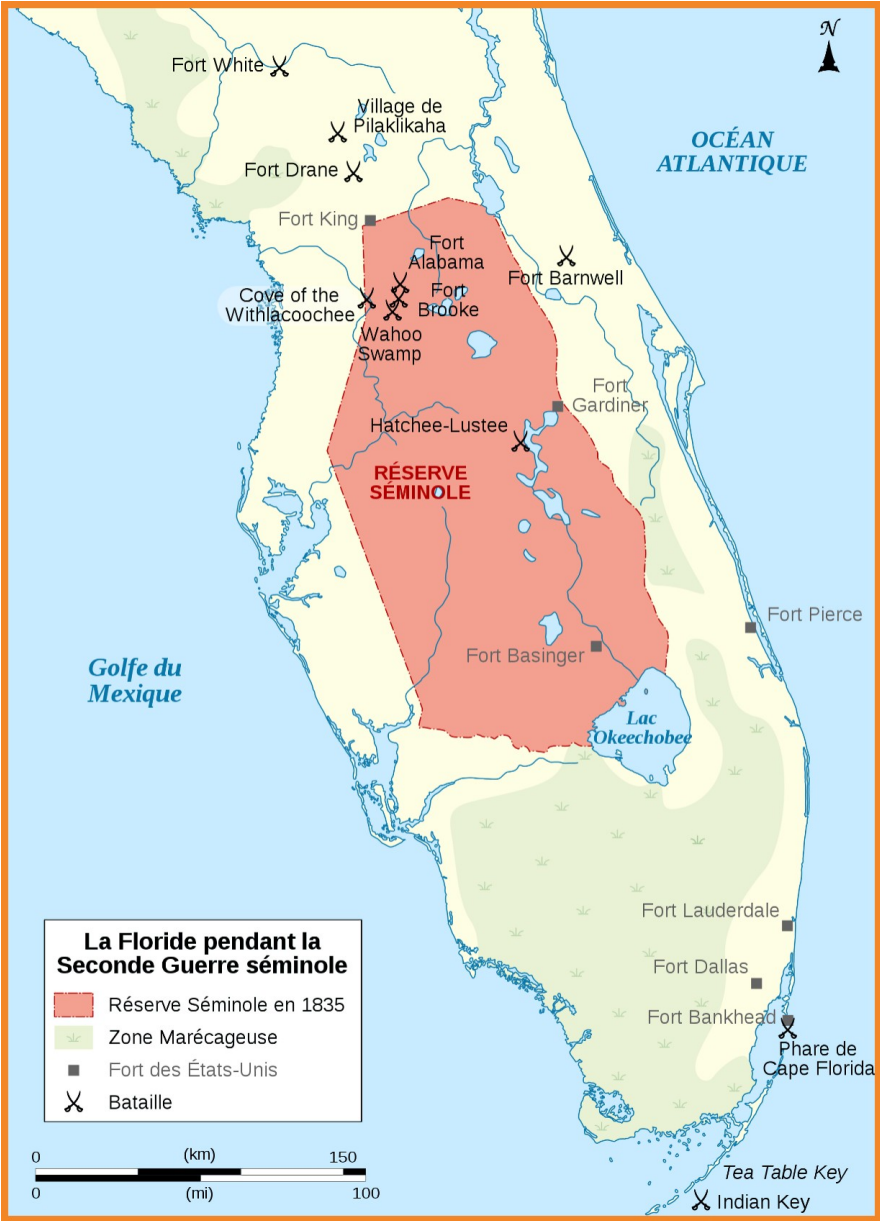
During the spring and summer several skirmishes between the Indians and United States soldiers occurred, in which the Indians and their black allies fought with remarkable pluck, perseverance, and success.

The want of troops trained for Indian fighting, the unwholesome climate, ignorance of the country, the absence of roads and bridges, and the difficulty of getting supplies had made it almost impossible to invade Florida without large sacrifice of life and treasure. The people of the United States, not appreciating the difficulties, complained so much of the delay that General Scott was removed from the command and General Jesup was promoted to the command in Florida.

In November, before General Jesup assumed control, an engagement took place which for a time threatened to close the war. On the eighteenth of November a force of five hundred soldiers attacked a company of Indians. After a fierce battle the Indians fled, leaving twenty-five dead on the field. This was counted by them their first defeat, for so long as they carried away their dead they did not admit themselves to be defeated. Three days later they rallied to meet General Call, who was advancing upon Wahoo swamp with over a thousand men. This was the stronghold of the Indians. Here their provisions, their cattle, their wives and children were hidden. The Indians had much at stake and made a strong defense. At last, however, they were compelled to retreat across the river. But they took their stand on the opposite bank behind a sand ridge, prepared to fight to the death.



The commander knew that if he could penetrate the Wahoo swamp successfully he would bring the Seminole War to an end; but before him rolled the swift dark waters of the Withlacoochee, and beyond waited the Indians like tigers at bay. He decided not to make the attempt.





# Osceola *and the* Seminole Sorrow



## OSCEOLA AND GENERAL JESUP

On the eighth of December 1836, under most favorable circumstances, General Jesup took command of the Florida War and entered upon an energetic campaign. He had under his command about eight thousand men. Among these were several hundred Creek Indians hired to fight the Seminoles with the promise of "the pay and emoluments, and equipments of soldiers in the army of the United States and such plunder as they may take from the Seminoles."

It will be remembered that Osceola had told the Indians that the war was not against women and children. General Jesup took a different view of the matter. His first step was to make a series of sudden raids upon the villages on the Withlacoochee in which he seized unprotected women and children. By his frequent sorties he drove the Indians south or divided them. On the twelfth of January he reported that he had sent mounted men in pursuit of Osceola, who was hiding with only three followers and his family.

The capture of women and children broke the spirit of the Indians. They felt that if their wives and children must be sent to Arkansas perhaps they would be happier there with them than in Florida without them. Accordingly many listened with favor to General Jesup's invitation to come to Fort Dade and hold a council to decide on terms of capitulation.

On the sixth of March, 1837, five chiefs and a large number of sub-chiefs met General Jesup at Fort Dade. They agreed to emigrate according to the terms of the treaty of Payne's Landing, but insisted that their negroes should be allowed to accompany them. This point was at last conceded them, and the fifth article of the terms of capitulation contained these words: "The Seminoles and their allies who come in

and emigrate to the west shall be secure in their lives and property; their negroes, their bona fide property, shall accompany them west."

Large numbers of Indians expressed their willingness to sign these terms and assembled at a point near Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay, where twenty-eight vessels waited in the harbor to transport them. Even Osceola is said to have sent word that he and his family would emigrate with the rest. The camp at Fort Brooke grew larger every day.

General Jesup was well satisfied. He reported that the Florida war was ended. And indeed it might have been had the terms of the agreement been adhered to. But slave claims were pushed; unprincipled men went into the Indians' territory and seized negroes; there was bitter complaint against the fifth article of the compact. At last General Jesup was induced to change that article so that it should contain a promise by the Indians to deliver up all negroes, belonging to white men who had been taken during the war.

This change was made with the knowledge and consent of only one chief, Alligator. When the Indians in general became aware that the terms of capitulation had been tampered with they were highly indignant.

General Jesup appointed a day on which all negroes taken during the war were to be brought in, but no attention was paid to his order. He then sent Osceola the following message: "I intend to send exploring parties into every part of the country during the summer, and I shall send out all the negroes who belong to the white people, and you must not allow the Indians or their negroes to mix with them. I am sending for bloodhounds to trail them, and I intend to hang every one of them who does not come in."

When Osceola received this message and learned that ninety negroes had already been seized by General Jesup as belonging to the whites he declared that the agreement had been violated and that the signers were therefore no longer bound by it. He instructed those encamped at Tampa to disperse. The old chief, Micanopy, refused to do so or to give the command to his people. One night early in June, Osceola entered the camp and visited the tent of the sleeping Micanopy. As he had always done before, the old man yielded to the wonderful personal influence of Osceola and did his bidding like a child.

On the morning of the fifth of June, General Jesup was awakened by an officer who came hurrying to tell him that the Indians had gone. Surely enough the great camp had vanished in the night. The captives had fled. Already they were safe in their marshy fastnesses. Families were reunited; all had had rest and food and clothes. The coming sickly season would make it impossible to pursue them till their growing crops were harvested. The Seminole war with all its difficulties was reopened.

Osceola, who a few months before had been a hunted fugitive with only three followers, without hope for himself or his people, was again a powerful war chief. With a brighter outlook his natural cheerfulness of disposition returned, and he hoped and planned great things for the coming autumn. Early in September he learned that his good friend "King Philip" had been captured with eleven followers by General Joseph Hernandez. King Philip's son, Wild Cat, came to him, saying he had been to St. Augustine to see his father, that the palefaces had treated him well and had allowed him to carry his father's messages to his friends. The old chief wanted Osceola to come to St. Augustine to arrange for his liberation.

Osceola, always generous and ready to serve a friend, sent back to General Hernandez a finely wrought bead pipe and a white plume to indicate that the path between them was now white and safe and to inquire whether it would be safe for his return.

Wild Cat soon returned to Osceola with presents and friendly messages from the general. With the hope of gaining the release of King Philip, Osceola started for St. Augustine with a large attendance of warriors. Wild Cat went in advance to announce his coming. With a great show of regard General Hernandez went out to meet Osceola with a store of supplies. He met his advance guard, and learning that Osceola would not arrive till evening, left word that Osceola should choose a camping ground near Fort Peyton, and went back to communicate with General Jesup.

The next morning General Hernandez rode out dressed in full uniform and escorted by his own staff and many of the officers of General Jesup's staff. He found Osceola and Chief Alligator with seventy-one picked warriors assembled under the white flag for council. The warriors had brought with them the women of King Philip's family, and about one hundred negroes to be given up in exchange for the prisoner.

After the usual greetings and ceremonies General Hernandez took out a paper and said that General Jesup wanted to know the Indians' answer to these questions: "What is your object in coming? What do you expect? Are you prepared to deliver up at once the slaves taken from the citizens? Why have you not surrendered them already as promised by Alligator at Fort King? Have the chiefs of the nation held a council in relation to the subjects of the talk at Fort King? What chiefs attended that council and what was their determination? Have the chiefs sent a messenger with the decision of the council? Have the principal chiefs, Micanopy, Jumper, Cloud, and Alligator, sent a messenger, and if so, what is their message? Why have not those chiefs come in themselves?"

When Osceola heard these questions he struggled to answer. He began a sentence but could not finish it. Turning to Alligator he said in a low husky voice: "I feel choked. You must speak for me." Perhaps his suspicions were aroused by the questions; perhaps he saw afar the lines of soldiers closing round his camp—at any rate he was deeply troubled.

Finding the answers given by Alligator unsatisfactory, General Hernandez, following the orders of General Jesup, gave the signal and the troops surrounding the camp closed in upon the dismayed Indians and marched them off to the fort.



**Chief Alligator – Billy Bowlegs**

In this way was the man that the generals in Florida pronounced the war spirit of the Seminoles conquered.





# *Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow*



## THE IMPRISONMENT OF OSCEOLA

Osceola and his warriors were taken by their captors to St. Augustine where they were imprisoned within the strong walls of the old Spanish castle of San Marco. It was very hard for these Indians who loved liberty better than life to be shut up in narrow dark cells, to be obliged to give up the warpath, to sit for hours, and days, and weeks, and months in inaction, not knowing what need their friends had of them but imagining the heaviest possible misfortunes for those they held dear.



**Fort San Marco**



Osceola could have stood the torture of wrenched limbs and of fire with haughty spirit unbent. What was that to this torture of the white man's, the dim light, the quiet, the narrow walls, the waiting, the not knowing, the fearing of evil?

The warrior still held his head high, but gradually the fierce gleam in his eye changed to a look of gentleness, of unspeakable sadness, and his winning smile came to have so much sorrow in it that men said to each other after they left him, "His heart is breaking." He was allowed to see and talk with other prisoners. When Micanopy and other chiefs were brought to the fort he was told of their arrival. When Wild Cat, after fasting many days, escaped through the small window in his wall with the help of a rope made from his blanket, Osceola was aware of it. But none of these things seemed to move him. General Jesup told the chiefs that he would urge the United States authorities to let them and their people stay in southern Florida if they would agree to keep their tribes at peace, guard the frontier, and themselves accompany him to Washington. Micanopy showed a little distrust when he heard the proposition, but Osceola took off his proud head dress and removing one of the beautiful plumes from it handed it to the man who had betrayed him, saying simply: "Give this to my white father to show him that Osceola will do as you have said."

The suggestion made by General Jesup was not considered favorably by the government, but he was instructed to carry out the Jackson policy of transportation. He had collected so many captives at St. Augustine that he feared trouble and decided to separate them. He sent all the negroes to Tampa and the Indians to Charleston, S. C. Late in December the Indians were shipped on the steamer Poinsett. Among them were Osceola, Micanopy, Alligator and Cloud. Besides the chiefs one hundred and sixteen warriors and eighty-two women and children were sent to Fort Moultrie. Osceola's two wives and little daughters were in the company. They arrived at Charleston on the first day of January, 1838, after a quiet voyage. At Fort Moultrie, Osceola was treated with much consideration; he was allowed to walk about the enclosure and to receive visitors in his room. Still he ate little and every day grew more wan and thin. All the chiefs were so low-spirited that great efforts were made to cheer them. A very popular actress was then playing at the Charleston theater, and knowing the Indian's love of whatever is cheerful and spectacular, the authorities at the fort decided to take the chiefs to the theater on the sixth of January.

Public sympathy had been excited by reports of the capture, imprisonment, and failing health of the once terrible Osceola. The theater was crowded with Charleston people more anxious to see the chief than the beautiful actress. The Indians were led into the brilliantly lighted hall filled with staring men and women.

They looked neither to the right nor to the left, but took their places in quiet and watched with steady eyes and unsmiling faces the entertainment provided for them. Osceola had made no objection to coming, but he sat amidst the mirth and glamor, so sad and stern that those who had brought him there and those who had come to see him felt rebuked. His trouble was too real to be easily comforted, too deep to be an amusing spectacle. The papers of the day recorded the strange scene of the captive Osceola at the play in poetry and prose.

Later an incident happened in which Osceola took some interest. George Catlin, who had traveled for several years among the Indians and was regarded by them as a friend, came to the fort to paint the portraits of the chiefs for the United States government. When Mr. Catlin asked Osceola if he might paint his portrait the latter seemed greatly pleased.

He arrayed himself in his gayest calico hunting shirt, his splendid plumed turban, and all his ornaments, and stood patiently while the artist worked. Mr. Catlin enjoyed painting the fine head, with its high forehead and clear eye. He made two portraits of Osceola, both of which are now in the collection of Indian portraits at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington.

Mr. Catlin came to be well acquainted with the chiefs whose portraits he painted, and used to have them come to his room in the evenings, where they all talked with great freedom. He felt deep sympathy for Osceola, who told him all the details of his capture. When Osceola learned that Mr. Catlin had been west of the Mississippi he asked him many questions about the country and the Indians living there.

But every day Osceola's health grew more feeble and, on the day when the second portrait was finished, he became so ill that he was thought to be dying. He rallied, however, and when Mr. Catlin left a few days later, it was with the hope that Osceola would regain his health and strength. He requested the fort doctor to keep him informed about the chief's condition.



# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## THE END OF OSCEOLA

The day after George Catlin left Fort Moultrie, Osceola had a severe attack of throat trouble. He refused to take the doctor's medicine. A Seminole medicine man came and gave the sick man Indian remedies. Osceola's wives nursed him tenderly, but in spite of all they could do he grew rapidly worse and died on the thirtieth of January, 1838, after three months of captivity.

Dr. Wheedon sent the following interesting account of his death to Mr. Catlin: "About half an hour before he died, he seemed to be sensible that he was dying; and, although he could not speak, he signified by signs that he wished me to send for the chiefs and for the officers of the post, whom I called in. He made signs to his wives by his side, to go and bring his full dress which he wore in time of war; which having been brought in, he rose up in his bed, which was on the floor, and put on his shirt, his leggings and his moccasins, girded on his war belt, bullet-pouch and powder-horn, and laid his knife by the side of him on the floor.

"He then called for his red paint and looking-glass, which latter was held before him. Then he deliberately painted one half of his face, his neck, and his throat with vermilion, a custom practised when the irrevocable oath of war and destruction is taken. His knife he then placed in its sheath under his belt, and he carefully arranged his turban on his head and his three ostrich plumes that he was in the habit of wearing in it.

"Being thus prepared in full dress, he lay down a few moments to recover strength sufficient, when he rose up as before, and with most benignant and pleasing smiles, extended his hand to me and to all of the officers and chiefs that were around him, and shook hands with us all in dead silence, and with his wives and little children.

"He made a signal for them to lower him down upon his bed, which was done, and he then slowly drew from his war-belt his scalping-knife, which he firmly grasped in his right hand, laying it across the other on his breast, and in a moment smiled away his last breath without a struggle or a groan."

Osceola was buried with some ceremony near the fort. Officers attended his funeral and a military salute was fired over his grave. This show of respect comforted a little the grief-stricken friends of the chief.

It is said that Osceola was not allowed to rest in peace, even in death. A few nights after his burial men of the race that despised him as a barbarian came by night, opened his grave and cut his head from his body. But openly only respect was shown to the remains of the greatest chief of the Seminoles. His grave was enclosed with an iron railing and marked with a stone bearing the following inscription:

Osceola,

Patriot and Warrior,

Died at Fort Moultrie,

January 30, 1838.

## REMOVAL OF SOUTHERN INDIANS

The war did not close with the death of Osceola. Wild Cat took command and the trouble continued till 1842. During the war the Seminoles lost many brave warriors; several thousand Indians and five hundred of their allies were driven from their homes in Florida to a strange land which they were obliged to share with their old enemies, the Creeks. This removal is known as The Trail Of Tears.

The white men gained the lands of the Indians, a vast and rich new territory for settlement, removed a refuge for runaway slaves, and established peace on the Southern frontier. For these gains, however, they had paid a heavy price in treasure, in human lives, and in honor.



# Osceola and the Seminole Sorrow



## Osceola's Head

This is the true story of the disappearance of Osceola's head. After the death of the Seminole chief, Dr. Weedon was able to be alone with the body. During this time he cut off the head, but left it in the coffin with the scarf that Osceola habitually wore tied as usual around the neck. Not long before the funeral Dr. Weedon removed the head and closed the coffin. Thus, the body was not dug up after burial and the head taken by unknown vandals, as various accounts have stated. Osceola was buried without his head.

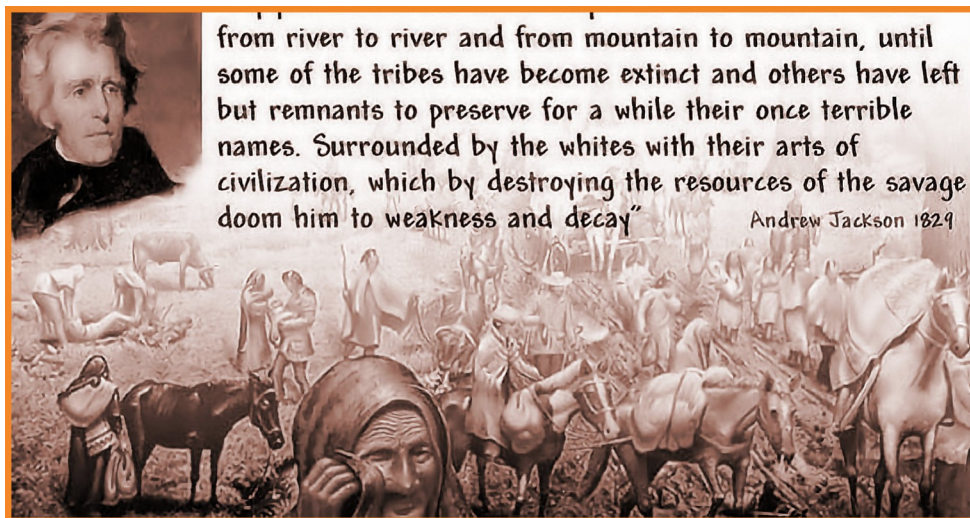
Dr. Weedon took the head back to St. Augustine with him, and kept it in his home on Bridge Street, where he also had his office, preserved by an embalming method that he had worked out himself. Why did he do this? It is hard to know his motives, for we are so far removed by time from the events and the way of thinking of those days. However, doctors then thought nothing of collecting heads of savage tribesmen. Medical museums had collections of heads brought in by sailors from South America, Africa and the South Seas. Phrenology was considered important, for the shape of the skull was thought by scientists to show intelligence as well as talents and aptitudes.

Dr. Weedon was an unusual man, and his methods of child training would not find favor today, for he used to hang the head of Osceola on the bedstead where his three little boys slept, and leave it there all night as punishment for misbehavior. His daughter Henrietta married a physician, Dr. Daniel Whitehurst, of New York. Dr. Weedon gave the head to his son-in-law five years after the death of Osceola, and Dr. Whitehurst presented it, in 1843, to the most distinguished surgeon of his day, Dr. Valentine Mott. Dr. Mott had been the teacher of Dr. Whitehurst, and was one of the founders of New York University Medical School, as well as of the New York Academy of Medicine.

What happened to the head of Osceola? Dr. Mott eventually placed it, with public identification of the source of the gift, with his head collection in his museum of pathological specimens. A catalogue now in the library of The New York Academy of Medicine, and published in 1858, has the following listing, under: "Miscellaneous - No. 1132 Head of Osceola, the great Seminole chief (undoubted). Presented by Dr. Whitehurst of St. Augustine."

This was the catalogue of the Surgical and Pathological Museum of Valentine Mott, M.D.L.L.D., Emeritus Professor of Surgery in the University of the City of New York. In 1866 Dr. Mott's Surgical and Pathological Museum caught fire, and part of his collection was thus destroyed. So far as we can determine Osceola's head was lost in this fire.

### END – Osceola And The Seminole Sorrow





## About the Author

**Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter.**

**As a wrangler on the “Great American Horse Drive”, at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.**

**His book, “The Oldest Greenhorn”, chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the “Gate-to-Gate” trophy belt buckle the hard way.**



## **Other books published by Larry W Jones:**

**A Squirrel Named Julie and The Fox Ridge Fox**  
**The Painting Of A Dream**  
**The Boy With Green Thumbs and The Wild Tree Man**  
**Red Cloud – Chief Of the Sioux**  
**Spotted Tail – The Orphan Negotiator**  
**Little Crow – The Fur Trapper's Patron**  
**Chief Gall – The Strategist**  
**Crazy Horse – The Vision Quest Warrior**  
**Sitting Bull - The Powder River Power**  
**Rain-In-The-Face – The Setting Sun Brave**  
**Two Strike – The Lakota Club Fighter**  
**Chief American Horse – The Oglala Councilor**  
**Chief Dull Knife – The Sharp-Witted Cheyenne**  
**Chief Joseph – Retreat From Grande Ronde**  
**The Oregon Trail Orphans**  
**Kids In Bloom Volume 1**  
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**The Jungle Book – The White Seal**  
**The Jungle Book – Rikki-Tikki-Tavi**  
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**The Jungle Book – Her Majesty's Servants**

## **Other books published by Larry W Jones:**

**The Oldest Greenhorn – Second Edition**  
**Life On The Mississippi**  
**Songs Of The Seas**  
**Treasure Island**  
**The Wind In The Willows**  
**Alice In Wonderland**  
**Peter Rabbit**  
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**Cynthia Ann Parker – Comanche Bride**  
**Black Beauty**  
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**Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit**  
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